



Diamondback Terrapin Preservation Project: 2008

Shelley Dearhart, *Education Programs Instructor*



Diamondback Terrapin Preservation Project



What is the Diamondback Terrapin Preservation Project?

Goals:

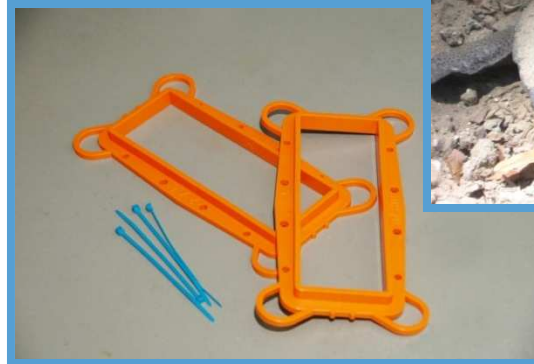
- Raise awareness
- Distribute excluders
- Find future funding

Objectives: Recreational and commercial crabbers in South Carolina will modify their traps with excluders.

Methods

Research

- Journals/Studies
- On-site resources
- Local Researchers
 - Meg Hoyle—DTWG
 - David Owens—College of Charleston
 - Mike Dorcas—Davidson College
 - Whit Gibbons—University of Georgia



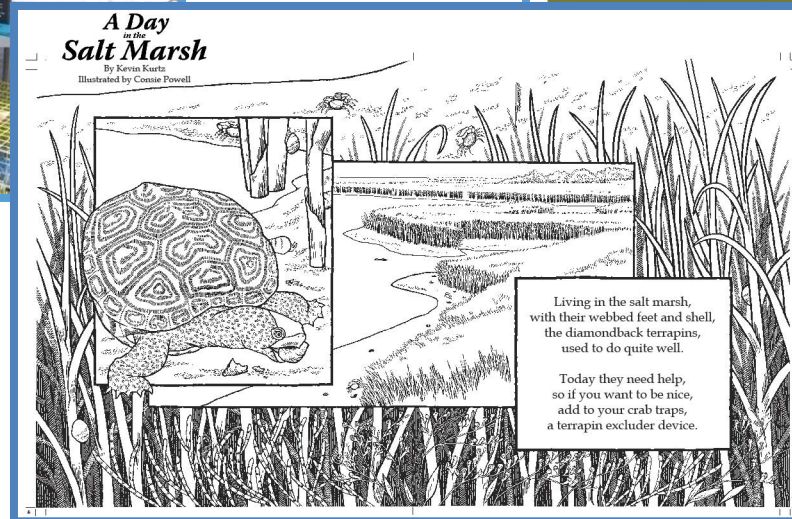
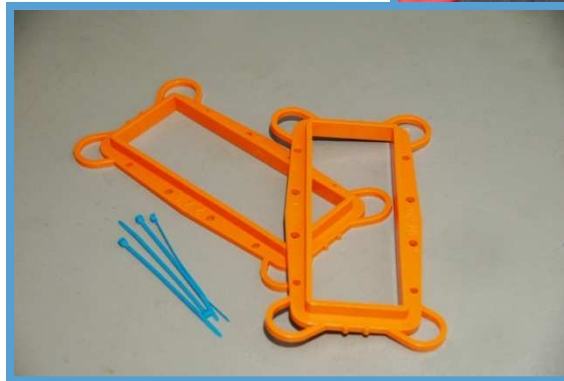
Methods

- Obtain by-catch reduction devices (BRDs)
- **Top Me Products**



Methods

Develop Outreach Materials



Diamondback Terrapin (*Malaclemys terrapin*)

The diamondback terrapin is an estuarine species that lives exclusively in brackish water. Their skin has low permeability to both water and salt making their survival possible in this unique habitat. Terrapins only leave the water to bask in the sun or to lay their eggs—usually between 5-12 eggs per clutch. Hatchlings head to vegetation after emerging from their nest.

Diet:
Marsh snails, fiddler crabs, some marsh vegetation, insects and worms

Range:

A map of the United States with a green outline indicating the range of the diamondback terrapin, which is primarily in the coastal regions of the Eastern United States.

Fun Fact:
When a terrapin feels threatened, it may vomit to make a quick escape.

Strong beak to crush shells of crabs and snails

Named for the diamond-like scutes on their back

Large paddle-like feet to swim better in water

Traveling Display



Brochures



Diamondback Terrapin (Malaclemys terrapin)

The diamondback terrapin is an estuarine species that lives exclusively in brackish water. Their skin has low permeability to both water and salt making their survival possible in this unique habitat. Terrapins only leave the water to bask in the sun or to lay their eggs—usually between 5-12 eggs per clutch. Hatchlings head to vegetation after emerging from their nest.

Diet:
Marsh snails, fiddler crabs, some marsh vegetation, insects and worms

Range:



Fun Fact:
When a terrapin feels threatened, it may vomit to make a quick escape.

Skin has low permeability to both water and salt

The average size male is five inches while the average size female is eight inches



Strong beak to crush shells of crabs and snails

Named for the diamond-like scutes on their back

Large paddle-like feet to swim better in water

Recreational Crabbing

You can help diamondback terrapins by modifying your crab traps. Recreational crabbing is popular in South Carolina. Unfortunately, diamondback terrapins may be unwanted visitors in crab traps. A terrapin may be enticed into crab pots by the bait as well as the crabs already caught. A group of male terrapins may follow a female into crab traps in hopes of finding a mate.

Terrapins breathe using lungs. They are not always able to hold their breath long enough to be pulled up by a fisherman and as a result, may drown in the trap.

Deaths in crab traps can be decreased by attaching bycatch reduction devices (BRDs) to each opening of the crab trap. If installed properly, the BRD can prevent turtles from entering the crab trap, but will leave enough of an opening to allow crabs to enter. This is just one effort that may help in the preservation of this important estuarine species.



How to install a BRD on your crab trap.



Step 1
Obtain a 2x6 inch BRD for each opening in the crab pot



Step 2
Orient the excluder in a vertical direction to the opening on the trap



Step 3
Use 4 zip ties to loop through the trap and BRD to attach the BRD at each corner



Step 4
Use a minimum of 4 zip ties to attach the excluder. More zip ties may be necessary depending on the trap

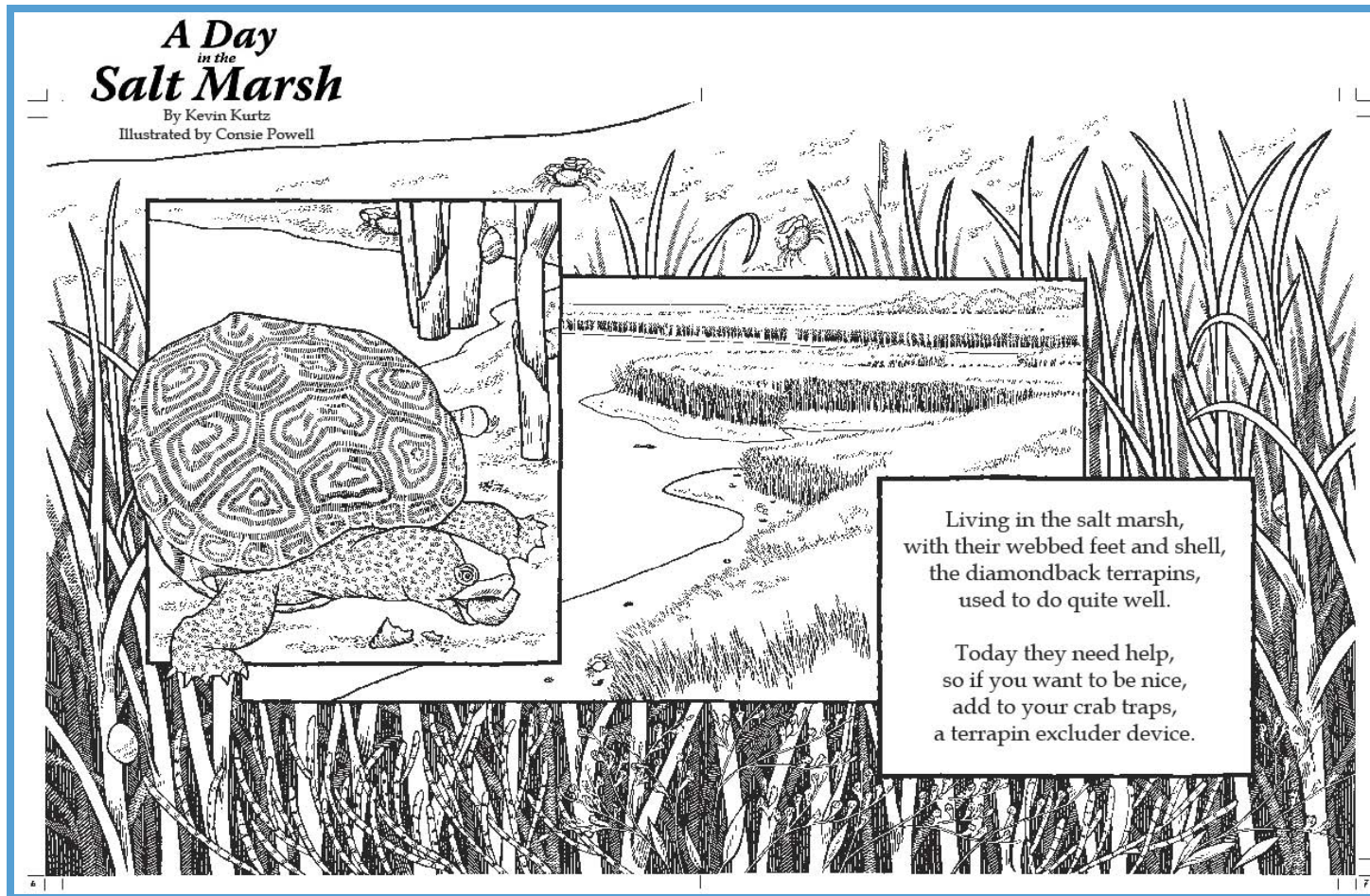


Funding for this project provided by SC DHEC/OCRM through a grant from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and NOAA (2006-0003-006)

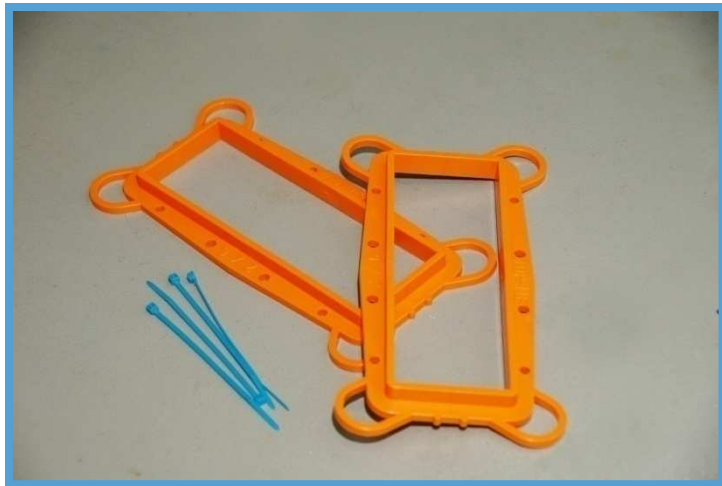
The views and conclusions contained in this document are those of the authors and should not be interpreted as representing the opinions or policies of the U.S. Government or the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation. Mention of trade names or commercial products does not constitute their endorsement by the U.S. Government or the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation.

Printed on paper manufactured entirely with non-polluting wind-generated energy and contains 100% post-consumer recycled fiber.

Coloring Page



Crab trap and Excluders



Live Terrapins



Methods

Organize Events

- Festivals
- Supply Stores
- State and County Parks
- Marinas
- Nature Preserves
- Coastal Museums
- Educational Wildlife Facilities
- Local Eco-tours



South Carolina Coastline



South Carolina Coastline



Media Coverage

- Appearance on local News stations
 - > *Lowcountry Live*, Channel 4 news
 - > *Live Five News*, Channel 5 news
- *Tributaries*, Aquarium membership magazine
- ETV *E-Live* national internet coverage
- Aquarium volunteer newsletter
- *Georgetown Times*, Georgetown, SC
- Various radio stations relating to festivals



Is this working?

- South Carolina Schools
- Huntington Beach State Park
Murrells Inlet, SC
 - > Emily Hutchinson, *Educator*
- E-mail feedback

South Carolina Schools

- Moultrie Middle School,
 - > **Mt. Pleasant**
Michelle Brooks
- Belle Hall
 - > **Mt. Pleasant**
Eva Stratos
- Archibald Rutledge Academy
 - > **McClellanville**
Pam Morrison
- Midland Park Elementary
 - > **North Charleston**
Jami Halloway
- West Ashley High School
 - > **West Ashley**
Margaret Spigner
- Spring Valley High School
 - > **Columbia**
Shannon Dunnigan—student





Is this working?

- South Carolina Schools
- Huntington Beach State Park
Murrells Inlet, SC
 - > Emily Hutchinson, *Educator*
- E-mail feedback

Measures

36 surveys given to recreational crabbers in South Carolina

- **100% would install a BRD in their crab trap**
- **46.8% had never heard of a diamondback terrapin**
- **10.8% had caught terrapins in their traps**
- **7.2% were unsure if they had ever caught a terrapin**

Measures

16 surveys given to non-crabbers in South Carolina

- > 20.8% had never heard of a diamondback terrapin**
- > 11.2% of people have been crabbing at least once**

Future



- Educational resource for the public
- Educational resource for crabbers
- Continuous supply of excluder devices for various venues

Future

- Incorporate DTP project into schools
- Expand terrapin conservation efforts statewide



Acknowledgements

- Funding for this project was initially provided by SC DHEC/OCRM through a grant from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and NOAA.
- Aquarium staff and volunteers who are continuous supporters of this effort.

Questions?

Contact: Shelley Dearhart

843-579-8565

sdearth@scaquarium.org

